

10 MAR 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Support
SUBJECT : Management Information System

1. This memorandum is for your information. It will start with a report of my week at the Department of Defense Computer Institute but as suggested by the subject line will be more inclusive. Perhaps it is better called a "think piece" than anything else.

2. I attended the Department of Defense Computer Course for Senior Executives the week of 28 February. I was one of 17 students all of whom were supergrade, public law 313, or flag officers. The three services plus DIA and NSA were represented. The course was intensive (50 hours in four and one-half days), covered a broad range of subject matter, and had as its essential purpose a generation of awareness in the students of the problems of the modern computer for the manager/customer. With some minor changes in the organization of the material, the course might well have been called Automated Information Systems. With such a heterogeneous group there was necessarily a broad range of material--some of which was not pertinent to one or more members of the class. However, without reviewing here the detailed subject matter, I must say that we all gained a great deal from attending the course; and I for one came away with my thinking considerably clarified about where I think we should go with our Support Management Information System, and further, what the Agency should do in the general field of data processing, the management of the people involved, and the organizational structure of the data processing group.

3. As you know, under the Director of Personnel I have the primary responsibility for the Office of Personnel in the field of data processing. I have been interested and concerned for the three and one-half years that I have been back in the Office of Personnel and am more concerned today than at any time in the past. My reasoning will be developed below; but at this point I urge that you and if possible your Deputy, Mr. Warfield, attend the course (it is given, I understand, 11 times each year). And further, that each of your Support Office Heads attend the course. It is critically important that the decision-makers be conscious of the problems of a computer based management information system. It is equally important that you and your Office Heads spend some time together to discuss the decision-making process in support of the Agency's activities and the information that you should have at your disposal in making your decisions. I believe you will agree that we are going to have a computer based information system, but I am greatly concerned that most of us are unprepared for it. It is not too late, however, to benefit from the experience of others and avoid repeating the errors which are terribly costly of time and money which I see ahead unless the actions I propose are taken.

4. There are some fundamental facts which must be dealt with. It is an easy phrase and now a common one that you only get out of a computer based information system what you put into it. You may have heard the word GIGO-- "garbage in, garbage out". This is merely the insider's way of saying that no information system is better than the information that we put in. But it isn't only what we put in but what we keep in that is important. May I illustrate. If you or any other senior officer of the Agency should say to us, "What has been the pattern of promotion of female officers in the Clandestine Service over the past ten years?", we must have retained in the memory of the system a status record at various points in time over the past in order to have developed comparisons along that time span. I think this is the proper kind of question to ask and similar questions must be continued to be asked, for future planning must at least start with what happened in the past.

5. From what I know and from what I hear, I am concerned that the Office of Computer Services is steadily losing people who have an understanding of our, the Office of Personnel, problems; and that the general understanding in OCS is a narrow one, concerned only with current processing and not with the comparative and analytical demands which we should place on the system. This is reflected, among other ways, in what we sense to be a lack of appreciation for the quite large memory or storage requirements that such use demands. As a matter of fact, I am not sure that the staff of OCS is particularly interested in data processing which, of course, is the guts of our kind of management information system. Another aspect of this same point is the organizational placement of the systems analysts and systems designers. I have long understood--and it was made unmistakably clear during the DoD Computer Course--that the computer tail must not be permitted to wag the management dog. The systems analysts and designers must be part of the organizational structure and, therefore, knowledgeable of and responsible to the decision requirements, in this instance, of the Chiefs of the Support Offices. To place them otherwise, i.e., in OCS, would result in the computer center telling you, the manager, what data you should and would be provided for your management purposes. It is entirely possible that part of the problem of staff loss in the present Office of Computer Services is a result of an omission on our part. We should have had it clearly understood from the beginning that we, the customers, would do our own systems analysis and design. Had we done this, OCS would not have recruited with the promise that those recruited would have the opportunity to this more professional phase of the work. We are fortunate in the Office of Personnel in having two people--[redacted]--who by reason of interest and training are qualified to represent us in this all important step. In addition to these two, we have been sending to as many courses as appropriate two others--the Chief of our Statistical Reporting Branch, Mr. [redacted] and the Chief of our Transactions and Records Branch, Mr. [redacted]--in order that they too may

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serve in this capacity. People at this level are not enough for us or any of the other Support Offices; hence, my recommendation that you and Mr. Warfield and the Support Office Chiefs get at least the exposure I had in the DoD Computer Course.

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6. One last point which I should like to make is that as I see a proliferation of hardware centers in the Agency, each serving a special purpose I come to--I think--an inescapable conclusion that the present Office of Computer Services should be under your command and control--providing not only the facility for processing Support data and providing a management information system to the Support Services, but also providing a data processing facility for any component of the Agency needing such service as distinct from a highly specialized document retrieval system, for instance DDP's [redacted]. Concurrent with such an organizational shift I would recommend the establishment of a single career service within the Support Grandfather Service, whose members would be all Agency employees involved with data processing or computer operation up to but not including the systems analysts and systems designers--who as I have said above must belong to the using components. Such a single service, I believe, would make it possible to more nearly stabilize the personnel staffing and provide a vehicle for recruitment, training, and progressive development of this group of specialists--who as a result of such attention to their careers would be more likely to stay with us.

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7. I profess no real expertise and perhaps I am a fool rushing in where angels would fear to tread, but I would welcome the opportunity to discuss in greater detail with you any part or all of what I have said in this piece. And also as a layman talking the language of the rest of your staff, excepting Mr. [redacted] make a five-minute pitch to your staff in support of my early point that your office heads must jointly discuss what we want out of the upcoming management information system.

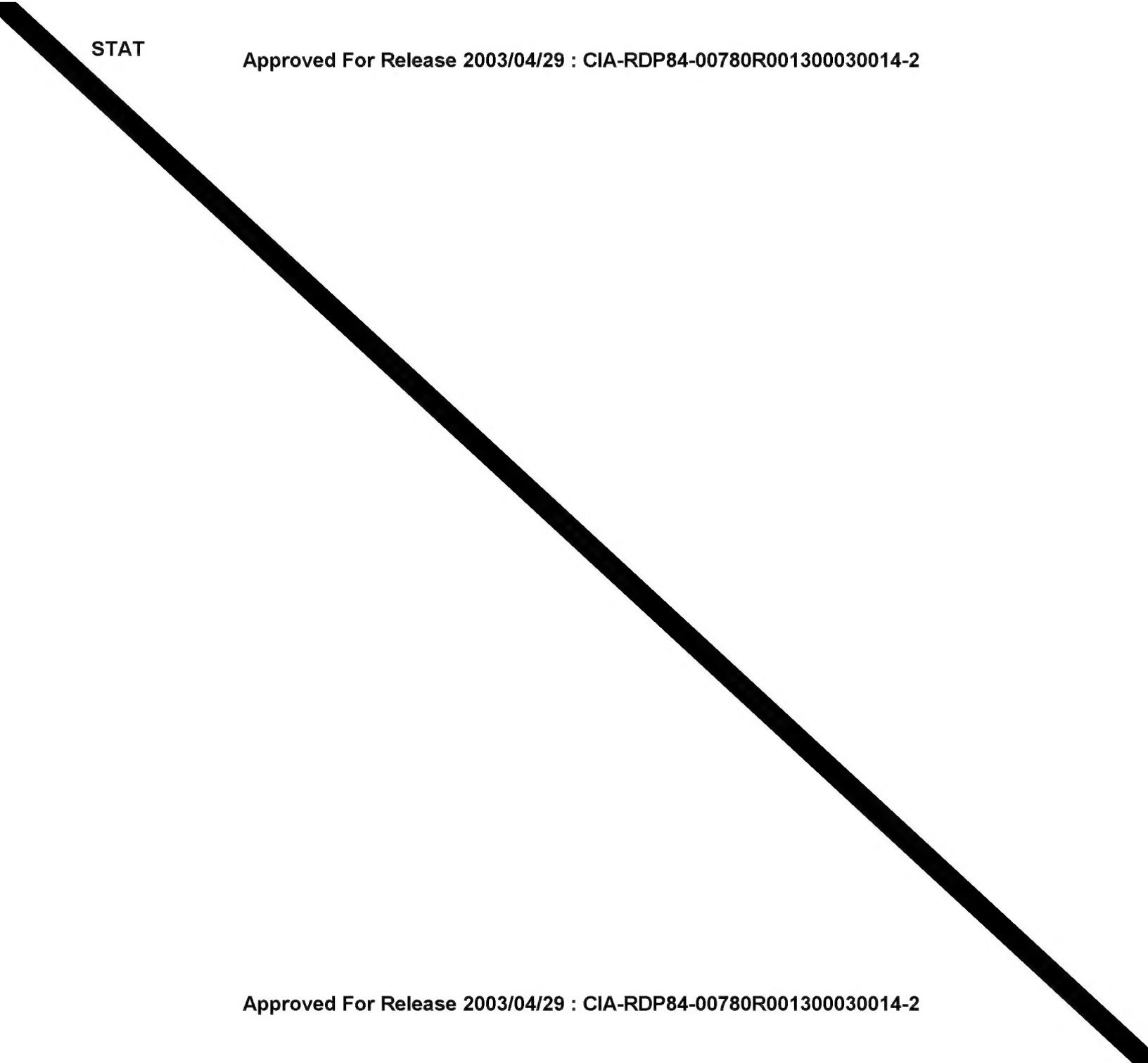


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Deputy Director of Personnel

PERHAPS THERE TOO, FOR CAREER PURPOSES
THE ASSIGNMENT WOULD ALWAYS BE TO THE
CUSTOMER'S OFFICE —

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